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GEORGE WARREN BROWN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

RESEARCH BRIEF

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The Southern Regional Asset Building Coalition Survey

By Gena Gunn and Jennifer Heffern

Introduction

The Southern Regional Asset Building Coalition (SRABC) was developed through a partnership between Tuskegee University, Center for Social Development, Alabama Arise, Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Florida Family Network, and Florida A&M University. The main goal of the coalition is to establish a network in the Southern Black Belt region for mobilizing organizations and coalitions around advocacy and support for policies and programs designed to address the devastating economic impacts of persistent poverty, hurricanes, and land loss.

The SRABC project was begun in 2008, supported by the Ford Foundation, Tuskegee University, and the Center for Social Development, to establish a network of organizations and coalitions in the Southern Black Belt region with vested interests in instituting positive systemic policy change in support of asset-building policies and programs. The first task the partners undertook was the completion of a strategic assessment of selected organizations in the southern Black Belt region, for the purpose of identifying factors that could be useful for strengthening and better mobilizing state and regional assets policy coalitions. A survey analysis has been completed. The analysis will

be used to provide SRABC coalition partners with an integrated profile of organizations in the region that offer inclusive asset-building programs, have established strategies or action plans in this area, and share a common economic vision for the region. The following is summary information from the assessment, drawn from the forthcoming report.

Survey analysis highlights

Respondent organizations: Demographic profiles

The total number of respondents for the online survey is seventy (n=70), representing organizations located in Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi. All respondents did not answer all the survey questions; for example, only 37 respondents identified the average number of clients they served each year, with almost half of those citing 501 to 1000. Over 80% of all 70 respondents serve rural populations, and over 75% serve urban populations, showing significant cross-over. Almost a fourth of the respondents identified their organization's primary role as community development, although a significant number were identified as serving multiple or "other" roles, including government, financial education, youth development, disaster assistance, multi-



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service, and health.

Type of Agency (n=70)	
Community development	24%
Advocacy	20%
Academic	19%
Community action	13%
Housing	13%
Non-profit trade association	9%
Financial services	7%
Funder	4%
Land loss/ownership	3%
Micro-enterprise development	3%
Other	47%

Target populations served by the organizations represented are mostly low-income families, single parents, youth, and seniors.

Target Population (n=69)	
Low-income	88%
Families	78%
Youth	69%
Single parents	67%
Seniors	61%
Homeless	30%
Farmers/fishermen	29%
Migrant workers	19%
Indigent	22%
Other	25%

Most respondents reported serving more than one race/ethnicity. Race/ethnicities cited as mostly served include African American, White, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American (listed here by number of responses).

Race/Ethnicity of Population Served (n=68)	
Black or African American	96%
White	93%
Hispanic or Latino	87%
Asian	65%
Native American	54%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	38%
Other	16%

Asset-building programs offered, funding, and challenges

About two-thirds of 66 respondent organizations reported offering one or more asset-building strategies and programs. The most common are financial education and training (over 70%), budget/credit counseling, building assets, homeownership/foreclosure prevention, asset-building policy development and advocacy, and IDAs (strategies listed here by number of responses given).

Interventions commonly offered to clients through these strategies include educational workshops, information sharing, training, classes, referral to other organizations, and technical assistance (n=64). Funding for these activities is primarily secured through federal government grants (70%), foundation dollars (68%), and private donations (60%).

Funding Sources (n=63)	
Public federal government funds	70%
Foundations	68%
Private donations	60%
Business enterprises/earned income	27%
Endowment	21%
Other	40%

A portion of the survey was designed to learn about any challenges impeding service provision experienced by the organizations represented. The respondents cited (lack of) organizational capacity as the leading challenge. Other significant challenges cited include transportation issues and (lack of) program buy-in by clients.

Challenges that limit services (n=63)	
Organizational capacity	71%
Transportation	40%
Buy-in from your target population	40%
Government support	38%
Lack of information	35%
Inadequate supportive policies	29%
Lack of public policies	25%
Access to state services	24%
Other	18%

Of the 60 respondents answering a question about whether or not their organization collaborates with similar organizations to strategize and troubleshoot problems, 100% answered affirmatively.

The most commonly sought information (needed by represented organizations to complete work) pertains to funding (85%), asset building, capacity building, and (building) coalitions.

Type of Information Sought Most Often by Agency (n=66)	
Funding	85%
Asset building	67%
Capacity building	53%
Coalitions	50%
Hurricane preparedness	23%
Hurricane recovery	21%
Other	12%

Coalitions: Demographic profile

A question about whether or not organizations represented participate in some type of coalition activity received 53 responses, with 89% of those replying in the affirmative. Over half of these coalitions are considered to have a statewide reach, and have existed for one or more years. Approximately one-third are organized as 501(c)3s, and almost all report meeting regularly (45% meet monthly), with the majority considering themselves to be “somewhat structured.”

Coalition's Reach (n=53)	
Statewide	60%
Local	49%
Regional	45%
National	25%
International	2%

The primary population group represented in the coalitions were identified as African American (98%), followed by White, Hispanic or Latino, and people with disabilities.

Populations Groups Represented in Coalition (n=49)	
African American	98%
White	88%
Hispanic or Latino	76%
People with disabilities	65%
Native Americans	37%
Asian	30%
Immigrants	27%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders	14%
Refugees	12%

Almost 90% of 46 respondents stated that they would be willing to participate in the Southern Regional Asset Building Coalition, and 92% of 47 respondents indicated interest in participating in the work of their state-level asset-building coalitions.

Coalition funding, function, and activities

Out of 44 respondents, 72% stated that coalitions represented in the survey receive at least some funding support. The majority of funding support comes from private foundations (53%), followed by in-kind donations from membership and private donations.

Type of Funding Support (n=38)	
Private foundations	53%
In-kind from membership	40%
Private donations	32%
Federal	26%
Private business	24%
State	16%
Other	26%

The majority of this funding was used for planning and implementation, capacity building, and personnel/salaries.

What Does Funding Cover? (n=39)	
Both planning and implementation	56%
Capacity building	56%
Personnel/salaries	56%
Implementation phase	31%
Planning phase	26%
Research/assessments	21%
Other	15%

The survey asked respondents to cite the primary (or most important) function of their coalitions. The most common primary functions indicated by those who responded were strengthening partnerships, policy and advocacy, and public education. Only 19% of 48 respondents see policy advocacy as a primary function of their coalition; however, 28% of the coalitions represented by 40 respondents (in a separate question) have determined a policy agenda.

Primary Function of Coalition (n=48)	
Strengthening partnerships	21%
Policy and advocacy	19%
Public education	13%
Capacity building for member agencies	13%
Resource sharing	10%
Information sharing	6%
Training	6%
Communications and marketing	2%
Research	0%
Other	10%

Survey analysis and next steps

Online surveys were completed by seventy non-profit, government, and academic organizations and institutions in the four states of the Southern Black Belt region. These organizations self-identify as committed to developing effective strategies for creating greater economic prosperity for all individuals and families in the region, including the region's high percentage of low-income African Americans, other minorities, and people with disabilities. The organizations belong to a significant number of area coalitions working on issues and initiatives that include general asset building, microenterprise, financial literacy, agriculture, housing, homelessness, transportation, children's issues, tax issues, and health. It could be of tremendous benefit to the region if these coalitions could be brought into a coordinated network and assisted in finding more effective ways of partnering to present a united policy agenda to state governments.

Several areas of strengths and challenges were revealed through survey responses. Strengths include strong inclusion efforts with diverse populations served; services offered to a large number of clients over large portions of states and regions; dedication to strengthening partnerships with other organizations in the region; a high degree of advocacy for inclusive economic and asset-building policies; some success in securing funding for coalition activities; meeting regularly with coalition partners; and some success in developing, funding, and implementing a number of asset-building initiatives.

Challenges revealed include organizations requiring more funds for programs and coalition support than are currently secured; a general lack of organizational capacity that limits services to

clients; lack of available transportation within the region; getting significant buy-in from clients on asset-building strategies and programs; some lack of consensus within coalitions on primary purposes, goals, and objectives of the coalitions; and failure to determine specific assets policy agendas within coalitions.

SRABC is completing a solid assessment of the strengths, interests, needs, and purposes of potential partner organizations and coalitions in the region, using survey analysis. This identification of partners, purposes and objectives related to asset-building strategies, initiatives being implemented, and areas of policy interest, is a giant step towards realizing the goal of creating a unified and purposeful network of asset-building partners and coalitions in the region.

Acknowledgments

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Authors

Gena Gunn, Project Director & Director of Asset
Building in States and Coalitions
ggunn@wustl.edu

Jennifer Heffern, Research Assistant
JStepp@wustl.edu

Contact Us

For questions regarding this research:
Gena Gunn
ggunn@wustl.edu
(314) 935-9651

For questions regarding this project:
Alice Paris
parisa@tuskegee.edu
(334) 727-8069

Center for Social Development
George Warren Brown School of Social Work
Washington University in St. Louis
Campus Box 1196
One Brookings Drive
St. Louis, MO 63130

csd.wustl.edu



Washington University in St. Louis

GEORGE WARREN BROWN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

CENTER FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

George Warren Brown School of Social Work
Campus Box 1196
One Brookings Drive
St. Louis, Missouri 63130-4899